

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Washington, DC 20423

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis, and Administration

May 8, 2006

Mr. David Coburn, Esq.
Steptoe & Johnson, LLP
1330 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036-1795

Re: STB Finance Docket 34284, Southwest Gulf Railroad
Company Construction and Operation Exemption – Medina
County, TX – **Request for Information**

Dear Mr. Coburn:

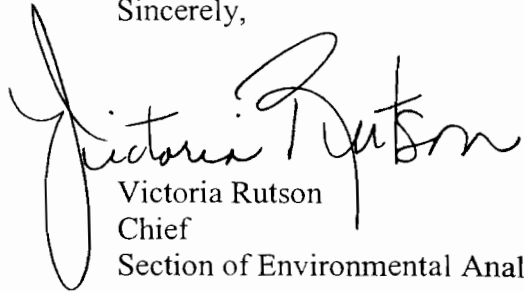
The Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is currently working on preparing responses to the comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS), issued on November 5, 2004, for Southwest Gulf Railroad Company's (SGR) proposal to construct and operate a rail line in Medina County, Texas. SEA appreciates the information regarding the project proposal that SGR has provided thus far. In conducting additional noise analyses, SEA has identified some information needs and would appreciate receiving the following additional information from SGR:

1. Please identify all potential braking zones along each of the seven alternative rail alignments being studied by SEA (Proposed Route, Alternative 1, Alternative 2, Alternative 3, Eastern Bypass Route, the MCEAA Medina Dam Alternative, and SGR's Modified Medina Dam Route).
2. Please provide a map showing a detailed footprint of the quarry with "limits of blasting" and proposed rail loading areas shown, if available.
3. Please provide the following information regarding quarry blasting activities for SEA's analysis of cumulative noise impacts: (1) the typical size of the charge per hole and the number and depth of holes or total charge weight; (2) the number of blasts per month (SGR has previously indicated that blasting would occur five times per week when the quarry is operating at its design capacity); (3) time of the day of the blasting; and (4) information regarding typical quarry noise levels from other similar quarries.
4. Please provide the following information regarding the loading track area: hours of train activity at the loading track area (same as for the rest of the rail line or different); whether spring-loaded frogs (i.e., crossovers) would be used at the loading track; the maximum train speeds proposed for the tangent track (i.e., straight track

sections as opposed to radius or curved track) and loading track, with the likely notch setting of the throttle. SEA notes that SGR has previously indicated that it anticipates that track geometry would allow for maximum speeds of 40 miles per hour on all or most of the alternative rail alignments.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation and your response to this information request. If you need additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Rini Ghosh of my staff at (202) 565-1539.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Victoria Rutson
Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis